

The Assembly met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I want to introduce to you and to all members of the Assembly, nine people who are seated in the Speaker's gallery who are taking treatment, I believe, at the Pasqua Hospital. They're staying at the Cancer Patient Lodge in the constituency of Regina Elphinstone, and I want to welcome them here today to observe question period.

With them is Mary Peterson, I believe, who works with them and works at the lodge. And I want to wish you all the best. In the trying times you're going through, know that our thoughts are with you, and welcome to the House today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Renaud: — Mr. Speaker, through you and to you and members of this Assembly, I would like to take this opportunity to introduce 11 students — they are seated in your gallery, Mr. Speaker — from the Tisdale Unit Composite High School, more proudly known as TUCS, and their teachers, Cindy Dickie and Donna Fritshaw.

This group of grade 10 and 11 students are extremely interested in the legislative process and have travelled nearly 300 kilometres to be here today. I ask all members to join with me in welcoming them to this Assembly.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Swenson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too would like to extend my welcome and the opposition's welcome to the people from the Cancer Clinic at the Pasqua Hospital. I had the privilege, I guess you would say, of being a patient there for eight months myself some five years ago, and can attest to the excellent quality of work and the wonderful people that are associated with the Cancer Clinic at the Pasqua Hospital. And I would just like to join the member from Elphinstone in sending our regards to you, and a speedy recovery.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — I'd like to introduce to you, Mr. Speaker, and through you to members of the House, Mr. Chris Axworthy, Member of Parliament from Saskatoon-Clark's Crossing, who is in the west gallery today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Neudorf: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I want to take this opportunity . . . I was not aware that Mr. Chris Axworthy is in the gallery there, but as my MP (Member of Parliament) I would just like to welcome him into this legislature too, and hi, Chris.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Remuneration of Government Executives

Mr. D'Autremont: — Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Premier. Last week the opposition asked in a written question for information regarding one Jack Messer, the NDP's (New Democratic Party) provincial campaign manager. As you know, Mr. Speaker, the minister for SaskPower, who is also the House Leader, converted that question into an order for return (debatable). In other words, Mr. Speaker, the minister believes it's debatable whether or not such information should be released to the people.

I therefore ask him today: will you table a copy of Mr. Messer's contract, as well as providing the information asked for in the written question? Or is it your intention to hide this information from the public?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I want to indicate to the Assembly that far from hiding the information, we expect to in the very near future make it all very public, to announce the salary. It won't be a contract; it will be a salary.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — What I can guarantee, that it will be considerably less than the 430-some-odd thousand that the previous president was making.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Supplementary to the minister since the Premier didn't reply. I'm glad to hear that the minister will be tabling those contracts, and will he be tabling those contracts for all new people hired?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — I'm not absolutely sure what the question was, but I want to indicate again that we do not intend to have a contract with the new president.

But I want to tell the Assembly, in regards to the new, acting president of SaskPower, one of his first duties was to check out the salary of the previous president. And what we found out is not only was he earning 400-and-some-odd thousand dollars but had set up a secret trust fund in which had been placed \$1.3 million dollars. One of his first acts as the new acting president of the corporation was to retrieve \$1.3 million.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — And in regard to that trust account, I have here a copy of the cancelled cheque that was retrieved from a trust account from a Saskatoon law firm made out for the amount of \$1,356,622.45. I do intend to table that. And I'll tell the member opposite, that the new agreement . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. I think the member has

sufficiently answered. He's going beyond the scope of the question that's been asked. Next question.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Mr. Speaker, a new question for the Premier.

Will you table a copy of the contract you ordered for your law partner, one Donald Ching, in this House today? If not, why not?

This is the law firm that had to change its name because all the partners are now part of the NDP government.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I want to indicate clearly when it comes to the staff person, Mr. Ching, there is no contract.

But I want to indicate clearly to the Assembly that there are many contracts that we are releasing. I have here a contract of one person by the name of Mr. Arden Knoll.

Mr. Arden Knoll, the previous premier will know, is a golfer. He is employed by SaskPower, being paid 30,000 a year to golf. Many say that he golfed many times with the premier in Estevan. He has no role in SaskPower other than golfing. He's presently golfing in Florida at taxpayers' expense.

I will be tabling this, but I would ask the previous premier, if you can help us in our . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Sask Works Project in Saskatoon

Mr. Neudorf: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I think we have just seen a classical example of a member who's very skilled at artfully dodging questions, refusing to answer.

Mr. Speaker, I direct my question now to the Minister of Social Services. In view of the classic example that we have had here of the sweetheart jobs that the NDP government is giving to their friends, while at the same time the Minister of Social Services is busy killing jobs for those people who are most in need, Madam Minister, my question to you is: are you aware that the Department of Social Services under Sask Works was in the process . . . and culminated a deal from Winnipeg to create 200 jobs for welfare recipients in Saskatoon, Martensville, Warman and Dalmeny?

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Speaker, what I said about Sask Works in the legislature. I repeat, any applications that have been processed will proceed. So if that application has been processed, it will proceed. We are not accepting more applications because the budget for Sask Works has been expended, and in fact is overspent . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Yes. Yes. Yes. And I wonder if it has anything to do with the fact that there was an

election.

The previous government spent too much money. The budget was 3.585 million. What has been committed already is 3.7, so we're overexpended. And it's not our fault; it's your fault because you overexpended it.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Neudorf: — Mr. Speaker, a new question to the minister. I am sure, Mr. Speaker, that the people of Saskatoon and surrounding area are just appalled at the ignorance expressed by the Minister of Social Services. She does not . . . ignorance of the fact that she does not even know of 200 jobs for single-parent welfare recipients that was created with Nygard from Winnipeg, so that they would come in, train, and develop 200 jobs for the welfare recipients of Saskatoon . . .

The Speaker: — Does the member have a question?

Mr. Neudorf: — Madam Minister, are you not aware of those 200 jobs? Are those 200 jobs . . . Is that contract that we made with Nygard going to be pursued and culminated? I want your answer.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Speaker, what I have said again and again is that this government, this new government, is going to learn to live within its means. You constantly overexpended. You expended money that you didn't have and that's why this province is in such a disastrous financial situation. There are all kinds of people out there who deserve much more money than they're getting, but we will not be able to give it to them because you have blown the kitty. There's no money left.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Neudorf: — A new question, Mr. Speaker, to the minister. I don't think that the people of . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Pardon me?

The Speaker: — The members have to be recognized by the Chair first. The member from Rosthern.

Mr. Neudorf: — Mr. Speaker, thank you very much. Madam Minister, the people of Saskatoon and surrounding area must still be in shock. There were 200 jobs for single-parent individuals on welfare that were now going to be hired, trained as seamstresses, as tailors for the cost of \$160,000 — \$800 per job.

You are now saying, Madam Minister, that you're going to close down, eliminate, cut off Sask Works and prevent these individuals from having permanent, productive jobs because of \$160,000. Madam Minister, is that your answer: there will be no Sask Works. There will be no jobs for 200 single parents, social aid recipients in Saskatoon.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What I am saying is the budget is overexpended already, and the

budget is overexpended because the members opposite overexpended the budget.

If you are talking to me about giving assistance — long-term, job-training, skills development assistance — to single parents, you just watch what this government will do as we get into our budget.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Neudorf: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The point is, Madam Minister, that the people of Saskatoon and surrounding area have been watching what this minister did. And they are saying to me, we want those 200 jobs. Are you going to supply them or are you not going to supply them because you have eliminated . . . you have cut out Sask Works. You're no longer in . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. That same question has been asked three times. I think the minister has answered. The member may not like her answer. We'll go on to a new question.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Neudorf: — You're right. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and you're certainly right. We do not like her answer and her saying that she is not going to create 200 jobs that were put in place by this government by this minister. I think that's a shame, Madam Minister, a shame. And you're sitting there laughing and grinning at that kind of a response. I think that is a shame.

My question, Mr. Speaker, my question to Madam Minister is this. You have gutted Sask Works. You have eliminated Sask Works. So why did you fire David Bucsis, and why did you move \$300,000 that was left over in Sask Works and have put it directly into the direct payment of social aid recipients? Madam Minister, why did you do that?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Speaker, I have never seen three questions full of so many inaccuracies.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — You had a written answer provided to you yesterday. Mr. Bucsis was not fired. He was a temporary employee who could only work for two years without having some change in his status. His contract in effect wasn't renewed. He was not fired. Let's start there.

The second thing is, no money was moved out of Sask Works projects. As I have said again and again, you spent more money than was in the budget. You overspent it. So your information is simply not accurate.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Neudorf: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A new question to the minister. Madam Minister, you're playing fast and loose with some facts here. You have indicated that David Bucsis was let go because he was on temporary. I

know how that works, Madam Minister. You are on temporary for two years. You're saying now that on December . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. Does the member have a question? You simply cannot comment further on the minister's answer. If the member has a question, I will recognize the question.

Mr. Neudorf: — Mr. Speaker, I have a . . . as I indicated to you I had a new question and I was putting forth the premise on which that question was going to be asked. And the premise is this — that David Bucsis was a temporary. We know that. Two years were up on December 3. We know that. You let him go. Normally what is done, it's extended or he's put on permanency. Why did you in effect fire David Bucsis and gut the program? The man who set up Nygard, who made the contact to develop 200 jobs in Saskatoon, you have let him go. You have not renewed his contract.

The Speaker: — Order, order. Order. I recognize a new question.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Financial Management Review Commission

Mr. Swenson: — Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Premier, Mr. Speaker, because it was the Premier who set up the Gass Commission and I think that's clear to all because of his signature on the order in council.

My question then is to the Premier, Mr. Speaker. Elizabeth Bilson has confirmed in the *Star-Phoenix* that she not only is a card-carrying member of the NDP but also a financial supporter and activist for the party of the Premier. We have heard nothing from the other friends of the Premier on this particular tribunal, Mr. Speaker.

Will the Premier now order that members of the Gass tribunal disclose both their political activities and political contributions so that people in Saskatchewan can know, Mr. Speaker, that this is truly a balanced and fair tribunal?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Before the Minister answers, that question is not within the jurisdiction . . . Political contributions that are made by individuals in this province are not within the administrative jurisdiction of any member of the government, and I just want to indicate to the member that question is really out of order. I'll ask the member to rephrase his question.

Mr. Swenson: — New question to the Premier, Mr. Speaker. Given the fact that, as I said, one of the members of the tribunal has come public and said that she is a political activist in the province of Saskatchewan and is on the Commission, would the Premier now tell the Assembly what the conflict of interest guide-lines for members of the commission are, and will he table those conflict of interest guide-lines in this legislature?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Tchorzewski: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to remind the member opposite that democracy still exists in this province although it was at risk during the term when the other members were on this side of the House.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Tchorzewski: — I, also in response to the member's question, want to say that the members of the commission are competent and skilled and have the expertise which is required. The members of the commission are Saskatchewan citizens and have an interest in the future of this province. The members of the commission are there to do a job, and they will do a good job. Whatever their political affiliation is, is irrelevant, Mr. Speaker. They're simply there because they are qualified for the job and that's why they have been appointed.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Swenson: — I could only gather from that response, Mr. Speaker, that the only qualifications necessary are to be an NDP activist in this province.

New question to the minister. Mr. Minister, wouldn't you say that, in light of the fact that Mr. Stevenson, who is I agree a prominent individual in this province, but also acts for one of the larger companies that is very integrated in our society today, a company that's in fertilizer and other things, wouldn't you agree, Mr. Minister, that perhaps it wouldn't be proper without conflict of interest guide-lines for him to be looking at the books of a competitor such as Saskferco.

And I think, Mr. Speaker, wouldn't it be appropriate that a member of the commission who works for a major law firm which has the Co-op upgrader as a client maybe wouldn't be appropriate in the absence of conflict of interest guide-lines to be looking at the books of the Husky upgrader.

I think, Mr. Speaker, to the minister, to the Premier: how could you possibly put a commission in place in this province which you say is to do this right and fair and in a non-partisan way without conflict of interest guide-lines for those individuals?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Tchorzewski: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I want the member to know that if and when there is a potential conflict of interest in the work of the commission on the part of the members because of specific areas, the members will declare that conflict of interest, and they will not be involved. That is required as part of the appointment under which this commission has been appointed.

And the member, I submit, Mr. Speaker, should stop getting up in this House and questioning the credibility and the confidence of these people who are good Saskatchewan citizens, who are concerned enough about the future of this province and the financial mess of

this province to dedicate their time so that the books can be opened and the people of this province can know what the real financial situation of Saskatchewan is.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Swenson: — Supplementary, Mr. Speaker. If the minister is so absolutely sure that this is going to take place, wouldn't he agree, Mr. Speaker, that this process would have been far better accepted by the public of this province and the members of this Assembly, if these declarations were taking place in full view of the public and full view of the media because, Mr. Speaker, I have a list here — a whole page long — of potential conflicts of interest because of the members of this commission being involved in different things.

Those members will be meeting behind closed doors, taking votes on whether they will look at a particular transaction or not. How can we be assured — and I ask the Minister — how can we be assured as citizens of this province, Mr. Speaker, that those votes will not be prejudiced and that those people will not in fact view something that would indeed bring upon litigation in this province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Tchorzewski: — Mr. Speaker, I want the member to remember that the reason why we need to go through this exercise is because he was on the treasury benches on this side of the House when that former premier and that government took a province with a surplus of \$139 million and left the people of Saskatchewan a debt of \$14 billion.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Tchorzewski: — And, Mr. Speaker, while members opposite in government were doing that, they secretively made deals. They would not provide information to the auditor about the deals that they made and the money that they expended, and the public didn't know. And I submit, Mr. Speaker, the public has a right to know and they will know, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Swenson: — New question, Mr. Speaker. One thing is abundantly clear, Mr. Speaker, to this Assembly, and that is that the minister opposite has a clear political agenda in this province. What isn't clear to the people of this province, Mr. Speaker, and I think needs to be asked is: how can his stated objective of having a new way of handling the finances of this province, as this commission is supposed to identify, be done behind closed doors by partisan people who do not have conflict of interest guide-lines behind them? How can that be an open process, Mr. Speaker?

And I say to the minister: will you now this day, because of all the deficiencies in this particular tribunal, Mr. Minister, will you now do what is right and appoint the Provincial Auditor as the sole arbitrator with the power to do this job properly and open so that all members of Saskatchewan will feel confident with this process?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Tchorzewski: — Mr. Speaker, the commission is able to hold public meetings if it should so decide that in the completion of its work it has to do that. It's an independent commission that is looking into the ledgers of the province of Saskatchewan. That is an option that the commission has and the commission will decide whether and when it needs to be able to do that in order to do its work, Mr. Speaker.

I say to the members opposite that I am somewhat surprised that they would publicly in this legislature be so openly admitting that they are afraid of opening the books in Saskatchewan. And I simply ask the members opposite, what are they afraid of?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Swenson: — New question, Mr. Speaker. And the question is directly to the Premier. Mr. Speaker, this member from Riversdale clearly went around this province during the last campaign and over a number of months saying that Saskatchewan needed to achieve a new direction in how the money of this province was managed.

Mr. Speaker, the deficiencies . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Swenson: — Mr. Speaker, the deficiencies that have been clearly pointed out in this Chamber by members of the opposition and by many members of the public at large demand that the Premier this day . . . and I say to you, Mr. Premier, will you now disband this unholy commission that you have put in place and do the right thing and appoint the Provincial Auditor?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Tchorzewski: — Mr. Speaker, the member from Thunder Creek is right. The people of Saskatchewan wanted a new direction and the people of Saskatchewan are going to get a new direction.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Tchorzewski: — They're going to get a new direction because the books of this province are going to be opened, Mr. Speaker, and they're going to stay open. And, Mr. Speaker, the Provincial Auditor's role will be enhanced because the members on this side of the House are going to allow the Provincial Auditor to do his work in the future in such a way as it was denied him the opportunity to do that work when that member from Estevan was the Premier sitting on this side of the House.

That kind of process, Mr. Speaker, will no longer continue. The Provincial Auditor's office will be strengthened and he will do the job that he must do.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Devine: — A very sincere and straightforward question to the Premier: Mr. Premier, you shouldn't be

afraid of guide-lines for the commissioners — conflict of interest guide-lines.

Mr. Speaker, I say to the Premier, why would you be afraid of guide-lines, for it's a public process? Why wouldn't you invite the media in, Mr. Premier? Why wouldn't you allow the full access of the public auditor and all of the decisions, whether it's going to be deciding on what you're going to do, whether you're going to pick on this company or that company?

You said on December 4, Mr. Premier, that you're not going to seriously jeopardize negotiations with other companies in public. Well you can imagine the conflict of interest that might be there. Companies would say, boy, will I come into Saskatchewan with that kind of an operation without guide-lines? Mr. Premier, why don't you just open it up, clean it up, do it in public, so that we can all be confident that we know what's happening?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Tchorzewski: — Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier, the commission has a job and a mandate and the terms of reference under which they will look at the financial affairs of the province to find out the kind of financial crisis that that member opposite left this province in when he was defeated.

Mr. Speaker, the public will have access to all of the information that the commission provides and the report that it makes. Mr. Speaker, the Provincial Auditor and the provincial Public Accounts Committee of this legislature will review that in full view of the public. And in fact, Mr. Speaker, the Public Accounts Committee can, and I suggest, will — it's not for me to tell the committee how to operate — will be able to call people who can be witnesses to this committee in order that this debate and this discussion can be made in front of the public.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Order. Order.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 9 — An Act to amend The Urban Municipality Act, 1984

Hon. Ms. Carson: — Mr. Speaker, I move first reading of a Bill to amend The Urban Municipality Act, 1984.

Motion agreed to and the Bill ordered to be read a second time at the next sitting.

Bill No. 10 — An Act to amend The Local Government Election Act

Hon. Ms. Carson: — Mr. Speaker, I move first reading of a Bill to amend The Local Government Election Act.

Motion agreed to and the Bill ordered to be read a second time at the next sitting.

STATEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

Ruling on a Point of Privilege

The Speaker: — Before orders of the day, I would like members to have a little patience with my statement today. I'm going to be ruling on a point of privilege that was made last Thursday in this House. And because the point of privilege was rather detailed, this statement, which I hope will not set a precedent for further rulings by the Chair, is rather lengthy and I ask members to bear with me.

On December 5 I deferred my ruling on a question of privilege raised by the member for Thunder Creek. In his statement the member argued that the privileges of the House, of individual members, and the Public Accounts Committee had been breached by the establishment of the Financial Management Review Commission, and in particular by the authority given to the commission to engage the Provincial Auditor as a special advisor. I then heard comments from several other members on the matter.

Before proceeding to the substance of the privilege question I wish to bring forward two points regarding the process.

I ask members to ensure that the notice sent to the Speaker contains the gist of the case and the relevant arguments. To do so helps to demonstrate that indeed the matter should have precedence over other business and also would enable a decision to be brought back to the House more quickly.

Subsequently the member's presentation in the Assembly should be brief and deal only with establishing that a breach of privilege has occurred.

The other point regarding process is that the member raising the point should conclude his or her remarks with the text of a motion to provide the House with an opportunity to take some action in the matter. While this has not always been required, it has become the accepted practice and is strongly encouraged. In this respect I refer members to a ruling of the Chair dated November 28, 1984, *Journals of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan*.

It is now my duty to determine two things: first, whether privilege appears to be sufficiently involved to justify giving precedence to this matter over the notices and orders standing on the order paper; and second, whether the matter has been raised at the earliest opportunity.

With regard to the question of whether the matter was raised on time, as pointed out by the member of Regina Elphinstone, this question could have been presented as early as Tuesday, December 3. The two-day delay weakens the argument that this debate should take precedence over other business and the whole matter could be set aside on these grounds.

I refer members to Beauchesne's *Parliamentary Rules and Forms*, 6th edition, citation 115 and 117. I caution members to be mindful of this restriction in the future. But at this time I believe it is important for me, first of all, to clarify the procedure involved in raising and considering

a question of privilege; and secondly, to ensure that the complex issues raised in this claim are dealt with on their merits.

The first point argued by the member for Thunder Creek in his question of privilege was that the Financial Management Commission, and I quote:

usurps the rightful, traditional, and constitutional responsibilities of the legislature for oversight and accountability functions;

And further argues that parliament has the, and I quote:

unquestioned right and indeed need to be the sole agent of accountability for the executive government.

While the member's research has outlined the development of parliament's responsibility to scrutinize the actions of the executive government, the arguments have failed to substantiate that the Assembly has any exclusive right to be the agent of accountability for the executive.

And further I see no evidence to suggest that an exclusive right to hold the executive accountable is necessary for the House to be able to perform its functions. Rather it seems to me to be a given fact that in a democracy, there are many checks and balances to the power of the executive. The important role of the Legislative Assembly and its officer, the Provincial Auditor, in holding government to account is supplemented by the media, the electorate, and interest groups.

Indeed I would go further to say that it would be novel to suggest that the executive itself has no role or responsibility in ensuring that appropriate processes are in place to provide adequate information and accountability mechanisms.

To summarize this aspect of the question of privilege, I can find no precedent in this Assembly or in the procedural authorities to support the claim that the Assembly has an exclusive right to scrutinize government as one of its privileges. Nor is there any support for the argument that an accountability review by the executive is an interference with the ability of the House to do its work and thus would be a breach of its privileges. It is also a fundamental principle that no new privilege can be created. I refer you to May's *Parliamentary Practice*, 21st Edition, page 145. On these grounds, I find that privilege does not appear to be sufficiently involved and thus there is no justification for giving this issue precedence over the regular business on the order paper.

The second point raised by the member in his question of privilege was the argument that the executive government has, by order in council, inappropriately attached the Provincial Auditor to a creature of the executive government, thereby damaging the independence of the auditor and impairing his ability to serve the Legislative Assembly and the Public Accounts Committee.

There are many arguments that can be put forward to

show that it is either appropriate or inappropriate for the Provincial Auditor to advise the commission. But these arguments are not my concern. It is my role to determine whether the member has sufficiently established that the order in council authorizing the commission to engage the Provincial Auditor as a special advisor amounts to impairment of the auditor's ability to serve the legislature, and thus constitutes a breach of privilege.

I have reviewed both the terms of the order in council and the relevant sections of The Provincial Auditor Act. Order in council no. 955 of 1991, subsection 3, recommends that an order do issue, and I quote:

authorizing the Commission of Inquiry to engage the services of the Provincial Auditor as a special advisor to the Commission of Inquiry.

I refer all members to The Provincial Auditor Act, sections 16(4) and (5) as follows:

(4) Where:

(a) the Lieutenant Governor in Council:

(i) requests the provincial auditor to perform a special assignment; and

(ii) causes the provincial auditor to be provided with the funding that the provincial auditor considers necessary to undertake the special assignment; and

(b) in the opinion of the provincial auditor, the special assignment will not unduly interfere with his other duties prescribed in this Act;

the provincial auditor may perform the special assignment.

(5) The provincial auditor shall submit, as soon as is practicable, a special report prepared pursuant to subsection (4) to the Lieutenant Governor in Council.

My reading of the above section indicates that the Legislative Assembly has considered in a general way the propriety of the executive asking the Provincial Auditor to carry out a task on behalf of the executive that is in addition to his normal duties. The Act gives the Lieutenant Governor in Council the ability to ask the auditor to do a special assignment and also empowers the auditor to accept or not accept the assignment at his discretion.

I believe the terms of the order in council respect the right of the auditor to agree or not agree to advise the commission. The Legislative Assembly itself has provided the authority for the auditor to advise an executive-appointed commission. I can only presume that the House, in passing the legislation, confirmed that should the auditor accept a special assignment from the executive, it would not necessarily compromise his independence nor impair his ability to serve the Legislative Assembly.

I therefore find that this argument does not sufficiently involve privilege to justify giving the issue precedence over other business.

The last argument raised by the member for Thunder Creek concerned the ability of the Public Accounts Committee to carry out its scrutiny, responsibility, especially in regard to the activity of the commission. The member asks how the Provincial Auditor could at once perform as the committee's chief advisor and investigator, as well as a special advisor to the commission. He concludes that this dual role must necessarily prejudice the Provincial Auditor's relation with the committee and its chairman.

(1445)

As I have already outlined, the Assembly itself has provided the means through statute for the auditor to advise the executive on certain matters. The member for Thunder Creek might think this provision is an inherent conflict of interest, but it exists none the less. It is not for the Speaker to make judgements as to its perceived merits or disadvantages. It is not the Speaker's role to second guess the Assembly's decision in this regard.

Therefore given the existence of such provisions, I can only review this case in present terms and not in terms of what might happen. I have no reason to believe the auditor would do anything less than his utmost to fulfil his duties to the Public Accounts Committee. Given the evidence before me, I find no prima facie breach of privilege relative to the Provincial Auditor's duties to the Public Accounts Committee.

In conclusion, I rule that the grounds presented by the member are not sufficient to establish that a breach of privilege has occurred which merits setting aside the normal business of this session.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Speaker, before orders of the day, I would ask leave of the Assembly to consider item 1 under government motions on condition that when the debate on item 1 under government motions has been completed, that the Assembly will revert back to special orders.

Leave granted.

GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

Forty-second Anniversary of the Declaration of Human Rights

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today marks the 42nd anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It was a historical date in 1948 when the General Assembly of the United Nations convened to affirm its commitment to maintaining world peace and the promotion and preservation of basic, fundamental human rights. This universal declaration emerged in response to the horrific atrocities committed against humanity during the Second World War and today serves to remind us of just how extreme the results of an

intolerant society can be.

In commemorating the anniversary of this declaration, a variety of celebrations are scheduled to take place across Canada. In Saskatchewan this week, December 9-13, has been proclaimed Human Rights Week with various activities planned in celebration of this province's past achievements.

These achievements have been secured only because of the journey which this province embarked upon many years ago. It is a journey to which there is no certain destination, but rather a continual struggle by progressive men and women committed to strengthening the very foundation of our society, a foundation based upon the guiding principles of fairness, equality, and compassion.

Saskatchewan has a long and proud tradition in recognizing the value of our differences. We have in the past and will continue to cherish our mosaic society, and we will continue to overcome the challenges which lie before us by building upon that tradition of community, co-operation, and compassion.

Mr. Speaker, let us on this day of celebration examine for a moment the accomplishments of which I speak. Saskatchewan was one of the first provinces to establish its own Bill of Rights, which was introduced by the first CCF (Co-operative Commonwealth Federation) government of Tommy Douglas in 1947.

More recently, this province established the Human Rights Commission in 1972 as well as a comprehensive Human Rights Code passed in 1979. Although much has been achieved throughout the years, much more needs to be done. It is simply not good enough to rest upon these past accomplishments. I want to assure all members of this Assembly, and the people of this province, that this government is committed to those same guiding principles of equality and fairness that guided former generations in this province in creating a more just society.

Mr. Speaker, we have as well over the years witnessed several improvements on the national and international stage regarding human rights. The Canadian Bill of Rights and the Charter of Rights and Freedoms guarantees equal rights for all Canadians. We as Canadians enjoy freedom of conscience and religion, freedom of thought, belief, opinion, expression, and of assembly.

These inherent rights, secured under the Charter and offered to each and every Canadian citizen, must never be taken for granted. They are, after all, not empty words, not words devoid of any meaningful application or purely symbolic of our society's ideas. Rather they are intended to remind us of who we are. These rights should be viewed as part of a living, breathing document known as the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, meant to guide our democratic institutions, our legislators, our law enforcement agencies, and our judiciary. Furthermore and most importantly, these fundamental rights serve to remind each and every Canadian of the way we wish to treat one another.

Mr. Speaker, this is not only a time of celebration in

recognition of the progress that has been made. This is as well a time of reflection — a time to reflect upon the benefits which we, as free men and women, enjoy in living in a free and democratic country such as Canada. It is a time to reflect upon those individuals or groups of individuals who have experienced or continue to experience some form of discrimination. We must renew our commitment to those members of our society, so that we will continue to work diligently to eliminate all forms of inequality.

I wish to conclude, Mr. Speaker, by asking all members of this Assembly to join with me in reaffirming our commitment to building a more secure, a more just and equitable society for all. It is our duty and responsibility as a democratically elected Assembly to continually search for ways to improve the quality of life for the citizens of our province.

We must recognize that our communities are enriched and strengthened by our differences. We must begin to turn our attention to broadening the traditional definition of human rights to more accurately reflect the public's concerns. We must take this opportunity to acknowledge the extremely serious problems which continue to ail our society.

I refer specifically to problems of violence particularly aimed against women and children, to racism, to sexism, to the problems faced by the disabled, and to poverty. In addition, this government is committed to ensuring that all Saskatchewan citizens have equal access to quality health and education services, to meaningful employment opportunities, and the right to live in a clean and safe environment.

I also want to take this opportunity to reaffirm our commitment to work with the aboriginal people of this province in developing solutions to the outstanding issues which have been neglected for far too long.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to conclude with a quotation which I believe accurately and appropriately sums up the essence of my remarks on this very important day of celebration.

In the words of Eleanor Roosevelt, and I quote:

Where, after all, do universal human rights begin? In small places close to home — so close and so small that they cannot be seen on any map of the world. Yet they are the world of the individual person: the neighbourhood he lives in; the school or college he attends; the factory, farm or office where he works. Such are the places where every man, woman and child seeks equal justice, equal opportunity, equal dignity without discrimination. Unless these rights have meaning there, they have little meaning anywhere.

I would urge all members of this Assembly to reaffirm their commitment to furthering the cause of human rights by supporting the following resolution. Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member from Regina Lake Centre:

That this Assembly, on this 42nd anniversary of

the Declaration of Human Rights by the General Assembly of the United Nations, formally recognize the extreme importance of advancing the cause of human rights in our quest for creating a truly just society.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Crofford: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to second the motion of the member from Saskatoon Fairview and to reiterate what he said, that one of the most outstanding features of our democratic process is that our work is never done. We have never yet, in the conditions of this world or this province, reached a situation where we can say that we've achieved our highest ideals.

And there's many reasons for that. Some of them are based on our individual behaviour, but some are based on our collective behaviour as a society. This morning, myself and several caucus colleagues had breakfast, an information session, with the Saskatchewan Council for International Co-operation, and they represent many, many community groups who are interested in furthering the cause of peace, justice, and development throughout the world. But one of the board officers of that organization reminded us that whatever happens to the weakest link in our society eventually comes to rest on all of us.

It's my personal belief that all humans, by virtue of being born on this earth, are entitled to some share in the social, economic, environmental, and political equity. And in an enlightened and productive society, each individual must have a right to a meaningful role, to contribute to the production of wealth and well-being and to share in the wealth and social benefit that's created.

Full employment not only provides the means for economic self-sufficiency but also provides an avenue for each individual to be fully participating in their community.

Another area in which I believe people need active participation is regarding the decisions that affect our daily life, because to be removed from the decisions that affect our communities, our families, and our children is to lose our sense of self.

The increasing concern over human rights at the international and local level I think is reflective of the degree to which people feel excluded from the decisions. In Canada and in Saskatchewan we have the benefit of expressing our views through the electoral system and the ability to change direction through the electoral process. We can seek to improve this system both from the point of view of accessibility and accountability, but we do need to recognize that we have a degree of stability in moving forward on these fronts that many nations would be happy to share. And this stability creates an environment where we should ideally be more able to pursue human rights, but it's not always realized.

A specific example in Canada has been brought forward over the last decade on the issue of child hunger and

poverty. Due to these and other concerns around the world of children being adversely affected by war, civil strife, poverty, and a myriad of other abuses, the United Nations saw fit to introduce a convention on the rights of the child. This convention embodies all of the rights conventions previously drafted by the United Nations, and it places children first in the fulfilment of all rights.

The convention recognizes that children live in the context of families, and it affirms that families have an obligation to their children. However it further affirms that communities have an obligation to families, to ensure that families have sufficient resources to meet the needs of their children.

In the past we have sometimes dealt with this problem by removing the role of the family and institutionalizing the needs of the child and the needs of families in poverty. And although this might be good emergency medicine, it does nothing to further the long-term ability of the family to sustain its responsibilities to its children, and it soon ensures that they are pushed into the non-participating fringe of our society.

Mr. Speaker, through the convention on the rights of the child, the United Nations seeks to assist the countries of the world in focusing their attention on this critical issue. And in order for Canada to be a signatory to this convention, each province must ratify this agreement. In Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, this would obligate us to ensure that all of our legislation reflects the priority placed on family and children, and would require us to ensure that resources as far as possible are dedicated to these purposes.

(1500)

Many of the families who are most adversely affected by the inability to meet their obligations to their children are people who have been effectively excluded from decision-making and full participation in the economy by virtue of gender, race, location, ability, and orientation.

Over the next decade the ability to come to terms with ensuring that all members of our society are fully participant and fully productive will be one of the main challenges of governments, as we cannot afford a society of socially and economically alienated and dependent people.

To end on a positive note, I believe we have the necessary political momentum for these changes. And on this 42nd anniversary of the Declaration of Human Rights by the General Assembly of the United Nations, I wish to reaffirm the value of this international body in continuing to help us to rise above the pressures of daily survival, and to reach toward the principles reflected in this important declaration in the pursuit of peace, justice, and development.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Martens: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too want to rise to deal with this motion as presented by the Minister

of Justice. I feel that is a very important part of our existence in this Legislative Assembly, as a part of a group of people who have been selected by our peers as an example of the dignity of the human being and the rights of the individual, to speak and to allow them to speak.

All of us take examples from who we are and what we are in rationalizing ourselves in relation to how we view the human right of an individual.

I guess I would bring an example to this Assembly of one of the events in my life that occurred that focused its attention on demonstrating what the fragile existence of the dignity of the human being are.

And I had the experience of going and visiting the refugee camps in the Sudan in Africa. And I travelled around for four or five days with David Lewis and other people from the federal government. And in my travels I stopped at about a half a dozen refugee camps. And in those refugee camps there were a variety of numbers of people, from 30 to 60,000 people in these refugee camps. They were people who had fled from Ethiopia, Uganda, other parts of all of the countries around the Sudan.

And as I went into these communities, I was struck and almost overwhelmed by the lack of the dignity that was represented there of humanity. People lying by tent doors, dying, and other people stepping over them as if it was what we would consider a dog or a cow. And that was the kind of thing that these people did. There was no respect for the human dignity, the life that these people had.

Point out a number of other things that struck me as a part of that desire of individuals to realize a better opportunity for themselves. And one person that we talked to had left Ethiopia and was on the camel for five days without food or water with his wife and one child, fleeing from the ravages of war, from a system that he did not want to be involved with, and came to a place where he could just have peace — peace with himself, peace that he didn't have to struggle against someone to protect his family, his wife, and himself.

These are the kinds of things I believe, Mr. Speaker, that make an indelible impression on each one of us. And as I talked about that or looked at that and I saw the different groups of people, we went to another community where they had about 30,000 people, and those are the ones that had fled from Uganda.

And they had a three-ton truck or a military truck with stock racks all the way around this truck, and they had people standing wall to wall in that truck. And they weren't young men and women in that vehicle. There were grandmothers and grandfathers who were so thin and fragile, and all they did was open the end gate at the back and these people would have to jump off.

We think we've got it tough in Regina when the street cars don't run, but when that's the means of transportation that they have to flee from a country that has no privileges, no rights, no respect for the human dignity that we so . . . we highly cherish it. But we look over it . . . we overlook it, I should say, in viewing what we need to do in minute and

minuscule ways of dignifying the human being. We have not seen those in a personal way. They would make their home by putting a blanket over a dead tree and they would crawl in underneath there. But there was some dignity there. And I saw this over and over again.

I walked to this one and it had a rug spread out in front of this little patchwork quilt put over this bush, and sitting inside there were all of what that individual owned. And on the blanket in front was a little pile of food. And he had put the pile of food in six different locations for the six days that he was going to have that food available to him. And there was human dignity there.

And I asked them, wouldn't someone who was hungry come along and steal that? And they said no. And in dealing with the dignity of the human being, I believe that there is in people like that the dignity to respect the other person's possessions and his right to his own food. And, Mr. Speaker, they had the respect of that individual even though they had pressures from their families about the individual . . . maybe they even had children of their own that were starving, and they would not go and eat that food.

And, Mr. Speaker, that's the kind of thing that each one of us have touched at some point in time in our background that is relevant to the dignity of the human life. And that's the kind of thing that I think that we need to show to other people. We need to dignify our existence in this legislature and those people around about us with the kinds of things that we have provided for ourselves, and give ourselves an opportunity not only to say that we should do things better, but we also have come a very long way from those kinds of existences.

I want to point out one other area that is very close to me. My grandfather came from the Soviet Union in 1906 and he came as a result of severe harassment based on religious freedom. And that harassment drove him and his family to come to Canada.

On my mother's side they came earlier, in the 1870s, to the United States, to Kansas, and they settled in Kansas, driven by an expression of inequality of rights. I have the law and I will dictate to you what has to be done. And because of religious freedom, both my parents and grandparents came to this country to settle in Saskatchewan and in Kansas and then later on my mother's family moved into Saskatchewan.

That's the kind of background and backdrop we have had. And I heard my grandfather talk lots about how at night they would baptize in the middle of the river with a lantern so that no one would see, giving dignity to what they believed to be their religious freedom. We need to have that kind of sensitivity to the kinds of things that are so very important for each one of us.

So for me and my family we consider these rights not as rights; we consider them as privileges. Mr. Speaker, it's a privilege for me to be in this Assembly. It's a privilege for me to have an opportunity to vote. It's a privilege for me to be able to walk up and down the streets knowing that society and this province has protected me to the place that I can do that. It's a privilege for me to be involved in

this Assembly and to be able to discuss. It's a privilege, Mr. Speaker; it's a right and it's the right of the human dignity.

Mr. Speaker, I want to point out three places that I believe that we should really evaluate just a little bit more closely what we do with human rights. I believe that the dignity of the unborn child also has to be begun by us to be made as a right, to have that individual have a right. Mr. Speaker, that is a very fragile, individual human being that is being carried by its mother and I think it's important for us to establish that that has dignity, too.

Mr. Speaker, my nephew has a son that has Down's and he's five years old. And he lives in British Columbia and they're coming home for Christmas. And I'm looking forward to having Nick come into my home and be a part of my community and be a part of my family.

Mr. Speaker, it is just as important for Nick to be involved as a human being in society in Saskatchewan and in Canada as anyone else is, as the unborn and as the grandmother. I believe in that. That's a fundamental right. But, Mr. Speaker, never underestimate the value of it as a privilege. And I want to make that point here today.

The other area that I think is really important for us to consider . . . and I noted in the *Maclean's* magazine two pages of an ad there really struck at the heart of what I think is wrong. When a group of people have a right that is superseded by the individual, I believe society then has a problem.

And I refer to an article about three grandmothers who decided to go to work and cross the picket line. I believe that the dignity of those individuals was — and their own privileges and rights — was superseded by the group and I don't believe that that's the right thing to do. I honestly believe that there is a necessity for us to always recognize that the individual must be recognized along with the group of people that they are associated with.

The third item that I want to identify as a way to express the intensity with which I feel about the dignity of the rights of individuals and the human right and the right are laid before us right here in this Assembly with the representation of the mace as a part of the dignity of the parliamentary system. And the example of Her Majesty, the example of the Lieutenant Governor, the Governor General, are examples of where we have come from. They're symbols of the things that we have gained because people were prepared to give up those dignities of the . . . or give the dignity back to the human being and the rights of that individual. I believe that.

And, Mr. Speaker, you are an example of the dignity of the human right because you as a single person have the right to sit in that chair. You have been given that right by the laws of this country. And I believe that that is fundamental to the belief of one person having the right to be here, the right to speak here, and the right and dignity and the privilege to exist in this forum.

So that leads me to the conclusion, Mr. Speaker, that these rights are not exclusive to themselves unless they deal with a sense of responsibility in our relationship to

society. We have to think about them not as rights; they are a position of rights, but they have to appear to have not only the dignity of the human right, but they have to have the dignity and respect that we place on them and the responsibility we have towards society. So I, as an individual, have to think about them as a privilege and a responsible attitude towards them.

That, Mr. Speaker, is how I view what we are doing here today. And I am pleased that the member opposite presented this motion in view of the anniversary of the human rights being a part of the United Nations. And I respect that and I will be supporting the motion that you have put forward, sir.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(1515)

Ms. Lorje: — Yes, my remarks will be brief, Mr. Speaker. I wanted to follow up on a few of the remarks made by the member for Morse. He talks about the dignity of human beings, and I too agree that all human beings have dignity. Not only the unborn, but also the women in our society have dignity, and we have to recognize, respect that, and understand that women do make choices.

Mr. Speaker, the member from Morse gave us a lot of anecdotes about his very moving and compelling trip to Ethiopia, and I was touched listening to those anecdotes. I know, as someone who has also travelled in many parts of this world, that there is a great deal of sadness and human degradation in this world. And we do have to, all of us, as committed men and women in this society, we have to work to stop that sadness, that degradation.

But, Mr. Speaker, the member from Morse said that in Canada we've come a long way, and I have to take exception to what he said because unfortunately we do see around us daily, still in 1991, many, many poignant examples of just how far we have not come. We see an incredible amount of poverty. We see an incredible amount of hunger. We see an incredible amount of sexism and of racism. We see a lack of respect for the basic rights of human beings as individuals and as part of larger groups whether that's trade unions or what. We all do have rights. We all do have to respect them.

Mr. Speaker, many people have often said to me, why would a group bother proclaiming a day? It's simply a pro forma thing and it doesn't really make much difference. To them, Mr. Speaker, I say no, that simply is not true. Because what we do see on a day like this, the human rights day, is that many, many volunteers in our communities all across Saskatchewan get together and do special celebrations to mark the occasion, and they use these days as opportunities to further educate their fellow citizens about the rights and the concerns that they have.

I have been very privileged, Mr. Speaker, to work with the United Nations association in Saskatoon, to work with the Pakistan-Canada association, to work with the Saskatchewan International Labour Program, and finally to be founding chair of the city of Saskatoon's Race Relations Committee. I have worked with hundreds of volunteers in the community of Saskatoon and basically I

have learned from them, Mr. Speaker, that human rights must always be considered to be rights, not privileges. Privileges are things that an elite group can take away; rights are something that are ours just by virtue of the fact that we are human beings born on this planet. We will always have to work to maintain those rights — that's certainly true — but nevertheless we do have those rights by virtue of being human beings, by being alive.

We must never forget, Mr. Speaker, that we are enriched by all people. It doesn't matter what the colour of their skin, it doesn't matter what their sex is, it doesn't matter what their sexual orientation is, it doesn't matter what their religion is — all people have a very important and valuable contribution to make.

So I think, Mr. Speaker, on a day like this in Saskatchewan in this legislative chambers, we do need to give pause to reflect on the importance of human rights, on the need to continue struggling to ensure that all people do have human rights. And we need, I think, to reflect what that means for us individually and how we can change our behaviours so that we can as legislators start to become examples in this society; so that we can individually and collectively rid ourselves of vestiges of racism and sexism; so that we can truly go out and raise our heads high with dignity and say, yes, we do respect the rights of all human beings and we will work to ensure that all human beings have rights. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Haverstock: — I, too, Mr. Speaker, support the hon. member's motion on this 10th day of December which marks International Human Rights Day. We in this Assembly should be most thankful for the basic human rights and the basic freedoms with which we are blessed in our country. And we as elected representatives in one small corner of this earth called Saskatchewan have a tremendous responsibility to be caretakers of the democracy and freedoms which we were entrusted to by our predecessors in this province, in the nation, and indeed, our Commonwealth.

Much of what has been willed to us showed vision and forethought. Much of our tradition shows a great respect for the rights of the individual and for the value of society as a whole. But there are some things which must change and we must accept responsibility as the instruments of that change.

There is a revolution in this world and there is evolution. All over the globe people are struggling to move forward in their societies. For some this means a struggle to achieve the barest of necessities — food, clothing, and shelter. For others, there is the fight for freedom and democracy which has taken on tremendous focus for our world in the past few years. We remember Tiananmen Square, the dismantling of the Berlin Wall, the fight for freedom in the Ukraine and Soviet Russia, South America, and of course, the emotional saga of the hostages held in the Middle East.

However, we must not ever become so smug as to think that the problems are all in someone else's country, Mr. Speaker. Canadians, indeed Saskatchewanians, have to

be very introspective when it comes to human rights and we must realize that we are not the world leaders that we could be.

We've only to look at the treatment of Canada's first peoples to recognize that there are Canadian citizens being mistreated in our justice system, denied access to quality education and quality health care. And we must look at the unprecedented numbers of people lining up at food banks. We must account for the heavy burden of responsibility being placed in our interval houses for battered and abused women; the unprecedented numbers of abused children; the continued trials of the disabled; the increases in racism.

And we must ask ourselves what we as individuals, as representatives of the people, are really doing to protect the basic human rights of our own people.

It is one thing for us to sit here in this Chamber, Mr. Speaker, and for our federal counterparts to sit in Ottawa and pass judgements on others through economic sanctions against South Africa, and other such measures which reflect our condemnation of apartheid in that country, but we must not get so caught up with self-righteousness. We must not become too comfortable. We must not continue to take for granted our liberties and our freedoms.

The burden is upon us in this institution every day to acknowledge the scars on our record as a government, as a people, and to begin the healing of our society.

We must take bold action to protect our children, the women, and the elderly, the disabled, from abuses. We must be open and honest about our treatment of native peoples in this province and in the nation. And we must ensure that our laws truly prohibit prejudice and inequality. This is not a fair and just world, Mr. Speaker, but it our job to make it more fair and more just.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, let me say this: we can have an impact on the global level through our local actions and we can begin here in this House to promote fairness and equality for all of our citizens. We can begin by setting an example of respect for our democracy, for the people who have elected us to this position of judgement and responsibility, by exercising good judgement and by taking responsibility for Saskatchewan's image in the nation and in the world.

And finally, Mr. Speaker, I say to my hon. colleagues on the government side, I am but one voice, but I represent the voice of many people who feel that the system does not hear them, that the people within this Chamber have lost touch with the people who elected them. And I will use my voice and I will urge all members to do similarly. I will use my voice to echo the concerns and the priorities of the people every day. We must rise above the temptation to put ourselves or our political parties first when we rise to speak in this Assembly. The very foundations of democracy have been shaken by this type of abuse. And it is time that each of us took responsibility to change that regretful reality.

We must make our moments here count, for there are

people who see us as the solution to their despair, Mr. Speaker, who turn to us for guidance and leadership. And it is ordinary people who share their incomes with this government in order to finance this forum in the hopes that we can make every citizen's life more secure as the result of our guidance and our leadership.

And if we truly accept this onerous responsibility, we must be far more considerate of how we handle the trust they have placed upon us. We must truly assess the goals and the priorities of our people, and we must work together to achieve them.

And every day when I leave this Chamber, I will ask myself whether I have made a contribution to the people of my constituency, Mr. Speaker, to the citizens of this province, that will add more fairness, more justice to their lives.

And, Mr. Speaker, I would hope that each elected member the world over, if they were to make that a goal day by day, the world would become a more fair and just place for all humanity to share.

And I would like to quote Horace Mann. I think we should leave with this in mind: "Be ashamed to die until you have won some victory for humanity." Thank you.

Motion agreed to.

SPECIAL ORDER

ADJOURNED DEBATES

ADDRESS IN REPLY

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the address in reply which was moved by Ms. Murray, seconded by Mr. Flavel, and the amendment thereto moved by Mr. Toth.

Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate you on your election to the position of Speaker. I have had the opportunity to get to know you over the past five years. And I realize, Mr. Speaker, that you now represent many of the constituents that I used to represent, and the constituency that you now represent is the constituency of Saskatoon Nutana, my old riding.

I know, Mr. Speaker, that you will approach your duties with fairness. The one thing I've come to learn about you is that you do speak your opinion. You are direct and forthright, and the one thing that you are, Mr. Speaker, is honest — regardless of what people may think about you. And I can assure the members of the opposition and the Leader of the Liberal Party that we have elected one of the most honest and principled men in this legislature, and he deserves our support.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Atkinson: — The other thing I want to do, Mr. Speaker, is I want to congratulate the new members of the legislature. I have spent the last week listening to their speeches, and one of the things that struck me is that the new members of the legislature know the history of their

constituencies. They certainly know who they represent. I have learned a great deal about various parts of this province in the last week. These new members of the legislature come to this Assembly with lots of new ideas and visions for the future and enthusiasm. And I look forward to working with all the new members on both sides of the legislature in the years to come.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(1530)

Ms. Atkinson: — The other thing I want to do, Mr. Speaker, is congratulate the old members. I know how hard it is to be re-elected. I note that many of the old members were defeated in the last election, particularly the old members on the opposition side of the House — or the government side of the House in the past five years. Some of those members that were defeated I am going to particularly miss, and I will particularly miss Peter Prebble.

Peter Prebble was the member of the legislature for Saskatoon University. He also was a man that I had the opportunity to share my constituency office with during the past five years. And I also got to know Peter Prebble on a personal basis. I had known him as a political ally, but I had not known him on a personal basis.

Peter Prebble is a man of great principle and honour. He is a very intelligent man. I think he's one of the few members of the Assembly in the past five years that had a degree in business. He was a Governor General's medal winner in the province of Prince Edward Island. And Peter, in my view, did a most able job of representing the poor and the dispossessed in our province. He brought to the attention of the public the whole issue of child hunger and poverty. And I know that Peter will continue to advocate his views on the environment, on uranium mining, and on poverty. And I look forward to seeing him in the next years ahead.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to thank the constituents of Saskatoon Broadway for re-electing me as their representative in this legislature. I can say that I am deeply honoured to once again represent over 11,000 constituents in the city of Saskatoon. I'm pleased that they have once again placed their faith in me to be their representative.

I want to assure the members and the constituents living in Saskatoon Broadway that I will do what I always have done. I will represent their interests with honesty and integrity. I will fight and advocate on behalf of them as citizens living in our province. And I will approach the challenge of governing — and we are now government; we're not in the opposition — in a manner that is fair and reasonable. And I will do my very best on behalf of the people I represent.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's interesting, I went home on the weekend and several constituents came to see me on the weekend. And I ran into several people in downtown Saskatoon and on Broadway and

they asked me what it was like to sit on the government side of the legislature.

And I had to tell them that it was the most different experience and that I had this tremendous urge to run over and teach the Conservative members how to ask questions. And I say that because I found it most interesting that the Conservatives used to be the government. They used to answer the questions; we used to pose the questions. And I want to tell the members of the opposition that you've got a great deal to learn about asking questions. And I can assure you that I won't be offering any advice.

Mr. Speaker, I want to briefly talk about the people I represent. The people that live in the constituency of Saskatoon Broadway are not unlike many others that live in the province of Saskatchewan. We have a wide array of people who come from all walks of life. But in particular, Mr. Speaker, we have a whole community of people who are very much involved in culture in our province.

We have visual artists, painters, and photographers. We have performing artists, people who are involved in the theatre. We have writers and poets. We have a publishing house, Thistledown Press, that's located in the constituency I represent. We have film and video makers. And we have a large number of musicians living in Saskatoon Broadway.

As well, because we are so closely connected to the university, we have people who are professional, and non-professionals who work at the University of Saskatchewan — professors and secretaries and maintenance people as well as administrators. Saskatoon Broadway also has over 200 teachers that live in the constituency. We have farmers, and we also have business people who work and live in the constituency.

Saskatoon Broadway is the only constituency in this province that straddles both sides of the South Saskatchewan River. Our boundaries are Idylwyld Drive, Queen Street, then down Spadina to 25th Street Bridge, along College Drive up to Cumberland, back down 8th Street to Idylwyld Freeway. We're the only constituency that has the Idylwyld Bridge, the Victoria Street Bridge, the Broadway Bridge, and the University Bridge that connect the downtown with the east side of the river.

We also have the Meewasin Valley Authority, that has a mandate to look after and protect the river and to ensure that the citizens have access to parks and much beauty.

Saskatoon Broadway, because it includes the downtown of the city of Saskatoon and the east side Broadway Avenue, also houses, or is home to, many of the businesses in the city of Saskatoon. We have lots of small, independent merchants that have their businesses in our constituency. These are people who contribute to our community in the way of being active volunteers. They are not absentee landlords, Mr. Speaker, but they are active participants in our constituency and in our city.

As well, Mr. Speaker, we also are home to a number of non-government organizations: Aids Saskatoon, Big Sisters, Immigrant Women, Interval House, Crisis

Nursery, to name a few.

We also have most of the senior citizen housing located in our constituency. And we also, Mr. Speaker, have a couple of very famous collegiates: Nutana Collegiate, which was the school that John Diefenbaker attended in his formative years; and we also have the Joe Duquette High School which I am proud to say, Mr. Speaker, is graduating most of the aboriginal grade 12 students in the city of Saskatoon.

Mr. Speaker, I'm also pleased to report that I am the MLA for the Premier of the province of Saskatchewan, and I'm also the MLA for the Leader of the Liberal Party. And if the Leader of the Opposition, the member from Estevan, was still living on Albert Avenue, I would be his representative as well. Senator Berntson and Senator Buckwold also live in the constituency I represent. So I can say that I represent some people in this province who are very active in political life.

Mr. Speaker, October 21, 1991 marked a most historical day for the people of this province, and it marked a most historical day for the people of this province because a New Democratic Party government was elected.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Atkinson: — I say it's historical, Mr. Speaker, because what we have seen and witnessed is an end to the politics of division. And when I say an end to the politics of division, I'm talking about a deliberate attempt on the part of the previous administration to divide people along rural and urban lines, along white and non-white lines, along sexual orientation lines, along lines of business and labour, along lines of men and women, along lines of pro-life and pro-choice, along all kinds of lines, Mr. Speaker.

And I can't help but recall the Premier of the province, some months ago when he was Leader of the Opposition, told a story about being in the North and he ran into an aboriginal man who was wearing a baseball cap. And on that baseball cap were the following words: We may have come here on different ships, but we're all in this boat together.

And I would say to the people of this province and to the members of the opposition that we may have come here on different ships — we may have come to the province of Saskatchewan on different ships — but we're all in this boat together, as the Premier of Saskatchewan has said.

And in order to alleviate some of the very serious economic, social, and political problems that face our province, we will have to engage in the politics of consensus and unity. We can no longer, in my view, afford to have divisions on the basis of what we do or who we are or where we live or what race we have or what sex we have. The politics of division were ended on October 21, 1991.

And when I see all the new members that are members of the Government of Saskatchewan, I can say that they represent both rural and urban citizens, men and women. They represent a wide spectrum of view, Mr. Speaker.

And it will take all of us, all of us working as government, all of us working in this Assembly, to come to grips with some of the very real problems facing Saskatchewan.

And I think we saw a first signal on the part of our government to end the politics of division. I come from a farm family that has been actively engaged in agriculture since 1903. And the farm family that I come from has been active in agricultural politics. One of the things that I have come to know is that farmers are an independent lot of people. They are fiercely independent and they have their opinions. And some farmers are open marketers, others are for marketing boards; some are free enterprisers, others aren't.

But when the Minister of Agriculture and the Premier of this province were appointed and elected, they made the decision that they were going to go to Ottawa with a coalition of farmers — a coalition of farmers representing all kinds of views in this province — and they were going to go to Ottawa to do one or two things. They were going to go to Ottawa to lobby for more money and lobby for a strategy that would come to grips with the agricultural crisis facing our province.

And we saw over 100 farmers get on a plane and go to Ottawa representing various perspectives. But they had come together, they had formed consensus, and the one thing that they were sure of was that there was an agricultural crisis in Saskatchewan and that the crisis needed to be dealt with immediately and it needed to be dealt with by Ottawa.

And I want to congratulate the Minister of Agriculture and the Premier of our province for having the will and the courage and the foresight to get people from various perspectives together to go to Ottawa and to lobby — to lobby for more farm aid and to lobby for a long-term agricultural strategy.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Atkinson: — In my view, that was the first signal to the citizens of our province that the days of the politics of division had ended and that we were going to work co-operatively to come to grips with our problems.

Now I had the opportunity to listen to the member from Rosthern the other night. And the member from Rosthern continually asks us where our plan is, where our plan is for the future of this province. Well, members of the opposition, one of the things that we will not engage in is what we have come to know in the province of Saskatchewan for the past nine and a half years. What we've come to know is no plan, but if you wanted something, all you had to do was ask, particularly if you were friends of the government, and dollars would be made available to you. We saw no plan and lots of spending on the part of the province.

One thing I can assure the members opposite is that we will spend but we will think before we spend. We will think before we spend. What we had before was spending but no thinking, and consequently our province is faced with one of the highest per capita debts in this country and one of the largest deficits in this country per capita.

We have lots of ideas. We do have a vision of the future in this province. We have ideas about spending, but we will ensure that we have a long-term plan in place before we spend the taxpayers' dollars. We can no longer afford fiscal insanity, and that's what we've come to know in the last nine and a half years.

We know that the people of this province do not expect miracles overnight. We know that. We know that the people of this province have had a great deal of patience in the past and they will have patience in the future. We know that if we explain to the people of this province what we are doing in a logical and rational way, they will support us. We know that if we listen to what people are saying and respond to what people are saying, they will support us.

We know that we have to think before we spend. And I can assure the people of this province that this government will think before it spends.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(1545)

Ms. Atkinson: — As I said earlier, Mr. Speaker, there are some serious problems facing our province. We have the agricultural crisis. We have a crisis when it comes to poor people in this province. We have the largest number of children living in poverty in Canada residing in our province. We have children who don't have enough food to eat; we have people who don't have enough food to eat. We know that we have to have an economic development strategy where jobs are created in our cities, towns, and villages. We know that we have to come to grips with rural depopulation and the need to provide services in rural Saskatchewan that are meaningful and in a fiscally responsible manner. We know that we have to be fiscally responsible, but at the same time provide services to the people who elected us.

These will not be easy tasks. We know that. But we believe that with all of the ideas coming from the members of the government, we believe with ideas coming from members of the opposition, that we will be able to prioritize the people's priorities in such a way that they will have access to economic development strategies and services.

We know that we can convince the federal government of the need to provide a long-term agricultural policy for this country. And if we can't convince this particular federal government, we surely can convince the next one.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Atkinson: — Because, Mr. Speaker, for the first time in Canada we have the opportunity to elect a New Democratic Party government under the leadership of Audrey McLaughlin.

Mr. Speaker, during the past five years the members of the opposition, the New Democratic Party, had the opportunity to raise all kinds of issues in this Legislative Assembly. We were concerned about health and

educational services; we were concerned about social services; we were concerned about municipal services; we were concerned about a lack of economic development and a reliance totally upon large megaprojects, money to out-of-province businesses, corporations. We raised all kinds of issues in this legislature.

And the other night the Leader of the Opposition tallied up some of the costs associated with the concerns that we raised. I can assure the people of this province that those concerns are still very much on the minds of the government members.

I can assure the people of this province that we will do whatever we can to come to grips with underfunding in education, underfunding in health, underfunding in municipal affairs, underfunding all over the place. But we will have to prioritize government spending; we will have to look at where government gets its revenue, and we will have to provide services in such a way that the most people will benefit from it. And we will have to provide services in a cost-effective manner.

But I know we have the will to do that; I know we have the means to do that, and I know that the one thing people can rely on when it comes to our government is that we will be open and honest with people and we will listen to what they have to say.

Mr. Speaker, I want to let other members of this Assembly who have not yet spoken speak in this Assembly on the throne speech.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I want to say something about my parents. As I said earlier, my family has been involved in the business of agriculture since 1903. My parents farm in the constituency of Biggar. They farm in the Springwater area. After I was elected in 1986, my mom and dad brought me some items that they thought it was important to have on my constituency office wall.

One of the things that they brought me was a painting of my home town. And my dad said to me: Pat, whatever you do, never forget where you came from. You came from the land, you came from rural Saskatchewan, and even though you may represent an urban riding, never forget where you came from.

The other thing that my mother gave me was a picture of Woodrow Lloyd who was the previous premier of this province prior to Allan Blakeney. Woodrow Lloyd was a high school principal in the town of Biggar, and he was the architect of our school division system that we presently have in the province. And Woodrow Lloyd was a most principled man who stood on principle in this legislature. And he brought in medicare. And my mother said, never forget the constituency that you came from; never forget your roots; never forget Woodrow Lloyd.

And the other thing that she gave me, Mr. Speaker, was a poem. It was a Robert Frost poem which we will find outside of this building. And it's a poem about taking different roads. And I've often thought about that poem in the past five years. I've thought about the different choices that people make in their lives, and the choice to

be involved in politics or to be involved as a teacher or to be involved in other areas of endeavour.

There is nothing wrong with being a politician. There is nothing wrong with representing people. We as politicians have to return to the days when politicians were a most respected group of people. And we can do that, Mr. Speaker, by doing one of three things.

When people ask us questions, we should answer the question with honesty. If we don't know the answer, we should say we don't know the answer. And if we can't tell the person the answer for confidential reasons, then we should tell the person we can't answer the question.

And I've found in the past five years that if you are honest with people and you tell them where things are at, they will trust you and they will respect you. And I think as all politicians in this Legislative Assembly, we have a commitment and a duty to the people of this province to tell people the truth and to be honest.

And if we can all do that as politicians, we can restore the image of politicians as honest people who are elected to serve their constituents. And I can assure the people of the constituency that I represent that I will always be honest with them and I will always tell them the truth. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Britton: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to first of all congratulate you as being elected as Deputy Speaker. I thought perhaps you would be our Speaker, and I would have accepted that too. I have worked with you before, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I'm quite prepared to work with you as Deputy Speaker and other things.

Also, Mr. Speaker, I would like to pass through you to the Speaker, my congratulations to him. And before we get to thinking that this is a pat on the back, maybe I'd better get into my remarks. As you know, Mr. Speaker, you and I have had some conversation before, and I guess we haven't always agreed, but I think we have come to a mutual respect of each other.

It's a pleasure, Mr. Speaker, for me to respond to the Speech from the Throne. And I would like at this time to congratulate all of the new members on the opposite side as well as on our side.

I don't think there's a feeling that gives you much more satisfaction or a good feeling as to know that more people in your constituency voted for you than they voted for the others. It's an emotion that you have to experience, I believe, to know what it is. I know when I was elected I felt a bit humble. And when I was elected the second time, Mr. Speaker, I also felt very, very good.

An Hon. Member: — You should have.

Mr. Britton: — And I do. And I also would like to draw your attention, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that my favourite critic is here and well. And I hope he will do his very best to encourage me along as I go. Applause is acceptable;

silence is preferable; but it's quite acceptable to applaud once in a while.

I want to say, Mr. Speaker, I must thank the constituents of Wilkie for their hard work and support through the years, and especially during the election. And I appreciate their confidence in me, Mr. Speaker, and I look forward to representing them for another term.

The Wilkie people are tough, they're independent, they're innovative. And most importantly, Mr. Speaker, they have an unconquerable spirit. They have learned to expect drought, grasshoppers, and almost anything just as many times as a bumper crop. And while we're having some tough times out there, Mr. Speaker, I find the optimism out there rewarding and encouraging. We are in trouble; they know it. They're in trouble, but they're not giving up.

The silver lining to this, Mr. Speaker, is out of necessity people from Wilkie, along with the people of Saskatchewan in general, are strong and resourceful, recognize this, and building on these seems to be helping the people find their full potential.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, over the past nine years much has been done in the Wilkie constituency on that potential. For example, four new schools have been built in Wilkie and several others have received renovations. And through combined support programs for farmers and community development and diversification programs like the rural development corporations and the community crossroads projects, the Greenhead Rural Development Corporation, they have formed and completed their opportunity survey.

Mr. Speaker, I could spend some time talking about Wilkie alone, but I think I have other concerns that I would like to express. Concerns that all the growth and all the development experienced in Wilkie and the rest of Saskatchewan for the past nine years, what it's all about, Mr. Speaker. Concerned as to what a destructive and yes, I might say, deceptive NDP government has in store for the province. They have promised much along the way, Mr. Speaker, before becoming government . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Thank you. I have my favourite critic going again, Mr. Speaker. It's reassuring.

Promises such as increased funding, health care, education, and, Mr. Speaker, the open government, the open government.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Britton: — For the last few days we've found out what open government's all about. That's open for everyone but them. Everybody else but them, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we're looking forward to the elimination of waste and mismanagement. The member from Riversdale was all over the country for many years now telling that four and a half billion dollars is all you need. All you have to do is stop the waste and mismanagement. We're looking forward to that, Mr. Speaker, because in that he says he will give us decreased taxes, he will eliminate the deficit and have a balanced budget.

And those promises have not gone unnoticed on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker. And surely, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the media and the people of Saskatchewan have kept track of these empty promises themselves. And I along with the entire province is waiting for the NDP to tell me how they plan to honour those promises.

An Hon. Member: — We'll get you as the Finance minister.

Mr. Britton: — That's right. That's right. I accept the position as Finance minister.

Mr. Speaker, where is the money going to come from? We've got to find this out. Where is the money going to come from to fund the NDP promises like bringing back the old dental plan? . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Yes. Where's his money?

Waste and mismanagement. Well that's fine. Under waste and mismanagement we're going to find a significant amount of money, to the tune of sixteen and a half million dollars, Mr. Speaker, to bring back the old dental plan; or about 83 million needed to bring back the old prescription drug plan; and over 481 million to eliminate poverty. We're going to find that in waste and mismanagement, Mr. Speaker.

Well we're hoping that that turns out because . . . Now it sounds a bit outrageous since the member from Riversdale has promised to do these things without raising any taxes. No tax increase. No taxes. I commend the member for that. I'm waiting patiently. I'm patiently waiting to see this happen.

And I would like the member from Riversdale to answer this question. It's not a hard one. Or my critic could maybe do that. And it shouldn't be too hard anyway. He has repeated many times, where did the money go? And for months now, he'd been saying the same thing. Now can he at least answer my question: where are you going to get the money? Please answer that question today.

Where are you going to get the money? Would the member from Riversdale answer that question, Mr. Speaker? I would be pleased to take my seat for a moment while he did that.

(1600)

Okay. That's fine. He's not going to answer. Well, Mr. Speaker, the following quote from the member from Riversdale just a year ago clearly shows that increased taxation is part of his plan for government.

In response to a question, I quote what the member said: You want to take a look at whether or not there are any sources of taxation in the large resource area. And that was on Cable Regina Night Views, March 20, 1990.

Now, Mr. Speaker, what is Saskatchewan's resource area? Well it's the oil industry, Mr. Speaker. But in fact the NDP have already claimed that they could have taken \$2 billion more from the oil industry over the past eight years. But, Mr. Speaker, the NDP are totally wrong. There

was not \$2 billion more for the government to take — not even close to that amount, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The fact is that under the present oil royalty structure the former government received — that's the former government, Mr. Deputy Speaker, being our government, the PC government — \$863 million more in oil revenue than we would have under the royalty system used by the old NDP, not to mention how the system stimulated growth in the oil industry and increased oil revenues for the provincial treasury and created thousands of jobs for Saskatchewan families.

Stifling the oil industry to become a cash cow for the NDP would be disastrous, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for families, for small businesses, and for all the people of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I used to be a bulk fuel dealer and I know where the large oil companies react and how they react to increased taxes. They vote, Mr. Speaker, with their feet and either shut down all exploration or leave for greener pastures. The ones left behind are the small producers. And what happens to them, Mr. Speaker? They go bankrupt.

Mr. Speaker, NDP members have promised increased oil royalties to fund everything from education to the farm safety net programs. This proves once again their lack of understanding of our province's economy, and that the NDP is still the same old NDP ... (inaudible interjection) ... The member from Riversdale says, I'm not a socialist; I'm new; I'm clean; I'm different; I'm a good guy. But he's still a socialist.

The same NDP, Mr. Speaker, that drove the oil industry into Alberta in the '70s, and they're sitting right across there doing it all again, Mr. Speaker. The same old NDP that made up figures to make good TV. Do you remember that? Yes, and they're right there. They're right there.

The member from Riversdale who scoffed, Mr. Deputy Speaker, at a document bearing my name last year, had each of the NDP promises costed out by bureaucrats. He has to answer a few of those questions, Mr. Speaker, questions like where's the money going to come from to fund these promises? Waste and mismanagement is what he said. That's what he said. All of this money's going to come.

Now, Mr. Speaker, when you have about 70 to 80 per cent of your income in fixed costs, it's pretty hard to find this kind of money in waste and mismanagement.

Does the member from Riversdale intend to keep the NDP promises that he made to the people of Saskatchewan? That's a question he'll have to answer.

Mr. Speaker, it may have been easy. It may have been easy for the member to ignore the figures a year ago and even the updated version just two months ago, but now it's time for him to lay out for all of us to see what his intentions are.

And I challenge the member from Riversdale, Mr. Speaker, to do just that — stand up today and let the people know if his word is any good. Can the people trust

him? Can he trust his colleagues?

Mr. Speaker, but I won't hold my breath while he answers that question because I do value my health. But I assure the people of Saskatchewan that I eventually will get to the bottom of these questions. These questions will have to be answered. And I will do the best I can to wring the answers out of that member from Riversdale.

Sooner or later the member from Riversdale is going to have to let us know what we can expect from him. Will he live up to his promises; will he live up to his word? The people of Saskatchewan voted him in because they believed him. Now we want him to fulfil those promises.

And judging from the last two months, the next five years will be filled with plenty of those broken promises, trying to lay the blame, Mr. Deputy Speaker, on myself and my colleagues. Well the opposition NDP, they done plenty of finger pointing when they were in opposition, Mr. Speaker — many times, shame, shame.

But, Mr. Speaker, things have changed. Things have changed, Mr. Speaker. The member from Riversdale and the member from Regina Dewdney can no longer make up imaginary figures to scare the people of Saskatchewan. The member from Regina Dewdney has hopefully learned a lesson about using fantasy figures in a very real world.

The funny-figure man, Mr. Speaker, should have been taught a lesson in his bloated budget that he released a few days ago. And I would like to read an article, Mr. Speaker, which pertains to this. This explains my point, Mr. Speaker.

It comes from the *Leader-Post*. It was dated November 23, 1991. And I quote Mr. Johnstone's article. And I'm going to read this into the record, Mr. Speaker, in its entirety. I think it has to be done.

And the headline: "NDP's bloated deficit projection may have backfired" — Bruce Johnstone.

And I will read this:

Deficit projections, like loaded guns, have the tendency to go off in the wrong direction.

And the new NDP government may have shot itself in the foot with the loaded deficit projection it came out with recently.

You'll recall last week that Finance Minister Ed Tchorzewski solemnly announced that the deficit for 1991-92 will be \$960.3 million, rather than the \$265 million projected in the spring budget.

"I am sure that the people of Saskatchewan will be as shocked as I was to discover the extent of the deficit, and how badly they had been misled," said Tchorzewski with a straight face.

Yet (to go on, Mr. Speaker) Honest Ed knew that the \$960.3-million deficit is as phoney as a three-dollar bill.

(Maybe that's what the Department of Finance used in their calculations, since the projected deficit is three times higher than the budgeted one.)

The department's own number for the deficit was actually \$888.3 million, since the government claims it will save 72 million in cuts and efficiency measures, neatly offsetting the lost revenue from the repeal of the provincial sales tax (PST). (Coincidental.)

But even that number has been bloated out of proportion by some fiscal fiddling.

For example, the \$888.3-million deficit contains 19 million for Fair Share Saskatchewan. (Now) wait a minute? I thought the government axed Fair Share back on November 6, a full week before the release of Tchorzewski's deficit projections.

Since when does any government calculate the cost of non-existent programs and tack them onto the deficit? Same thing with the \$25-million "overexpenditure" in the mortgage protection plan.

Last March, the former government announced the threshold for the program's interest rate subsidy would be increased to thirteen and three-quarter per cent from the ten and three-quarter per cent, substantially reducing the cost of the program. Of course the budget was never passed, and the program died with it.

Is the NDP government going to keep the program as is, or do what the Tories planned to do and save \$25 million? Would any sane government leave it at ten and three-quarter per cent? Of course, the big-ticket item is the \$250-million dividend from the Crown Investments Corp. (CIC), the government's holding company. By forgoing the dividend from CIC, the projected deficit basically doubles in size.

Yet no explanation was offered as to where the \$250-million dividend went or why it wasn't taken.

These few examples show the NDP was more interested in tarnishing the Tories' already tarnished reputation for fiscal management than providing an accurate picture of the deficit. Of course, people outside the province — who don't know the subtle nuances of political debate in these parts — might mistake Tchorzewski's bogus budget deficit for the real McCoy.

Unfortunately, that appears to be exactly what happened.

Accustomed to believing the words of provincial finance ministers as gospel, the good, but gullible, folks at the Dominion Bond Rating Service in Toronto took Tchorzewski at his word.

They duly noted the new deficit figure of \$888.3 million — and lowered the province's credit rating (immediately).

And they lowered it from "A low" to "BBB high." That puts Saskatchewan bonds in a class ahead of Newfoundland and Bob Campeau junk bonds and behind every other province in the country.

(Now) Downgrading our bonds to "BBB" could mean we'll have to offer a higher rate of interest to compensate investors for the higher risk involved. It also means fewer investors are willing to buy our bonds, meaning still higher rates. At this rate, the province will soon be borrowing . . . (on the) Money Mart.

Naturally, Tchorzewski and the other top Finance Department mandarins weren't around to comment on the credit rating downgrade. They were in New York, talking to the good folks at Moody's, Standard and Poors and other U.S. bond rating agencies.

No doubt they were telling the New York money men that things really aren't as bad as they made them out to be.

So the moral of the story is (Mr. Deputy Speaker): Don't play around with deficit figures, because somebody may actually believe them. And if that somebody is a national bond rating agency, you're really in trouble.

In other words, don't play with a loaded gun. You might shoot yourself in the foot, or, as one Regina stock broker remarked, another part of the male anatomy.

Mr. Speaker, that is a direct quote. Mr. Speaker, Mr. Johnstone did not take the member from Regina Dewdney's bloated budget figures at face value, but instead chose to prove what many members on this side of the House already knew — that the NDP are playing games.

Mr. Speaker, it's quite easy to leave \$250 million as a retained earnings until their budget and then pull it out and use it . . . and pull it out and say, hey look what we done. Yes, look what we've done. Look what we've done.

Well the people don't believe it. Mr. Blackstone don't believe it. And anyone who watches will not believe that stuff.

(1615)

Mr. Speaker, games like this are destructive to the people of the province and to our future as well — games that destroy the credibility of our economic plans as evidenced in a second article, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have another article, and I will read the headlines. And this is in the *Leader-Post*, Thursday, November 28, 1991: "Sask. is put on credit watch."

Downgrading will cost an additional \$2.5 million on the \$1 billion the province plans to borrow this fiscal year. For the second time in less than a week, a major bond rating agency has lowered Saskatchewan's credit rating due to the concerns over the rising debt and the weak economy.

The S&P report noted the NDP government has promised to balance the budget, but "has yet not defined a clear strategy . . ."

Mr. Speaker, they don't have it. The bond people are nervous, down goes our credit rating.

Now, Mr. Speaker, a credit watch means that it can go lower. It can go lower yet at a cost to the Saskatchewan people. And directly as a result of the NDP minister's financed, pretend deficit figures, major bond rating agency are lowering our credit rating. And the article I just displayed, Mr. Speaker, quotes again — and this was in the *Leader-Post*:

Standard and Poor's Corporation of New York noted the NDP government has promised to balance the budget but "has not yet defined a clear strategy to achieve this target."

An Hon. Member: — Got to open the books first.

Mr. Britton: — Open the books. We would like to open the books back about 20 years. Take a look at Nabu. Take a look at Cablecom. Yes, yes let's take a look at those.

Mr. Speaker, this new bond rating makes Saskatchewan's credit the lowest, or second lowest in Canada. Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan has also been issued a credit watch as I mentioned. And it was just a warning — just a warning that the rating could go down further. That should be considered quite serious over on the other side, but they just have a lot of fun over there.

My special critic is having a lot of fun. He thinks it's not serious, Mr. Speaker. I think it's serious. Mr. Speaker, I think this is dangerous, and I certainly hope the Minister of Finance has taken heed of the warning instead of trying to pass the buck. The minister has already tried to lay the blame on the fact that one of the main reasons the province won't receive any money this year from the Crown Investments Corporation is because of a dilution of share value resulting from a Cameco share offering.

While claiming to be a Finance minister while standing behind such bunk as that, Mr. Speaker, is ridiculous.

The Minister of Finance is acting like a home owner who rents the basement suite for \$400 a month. Then the real estate market takes a downturn and the value of his house drops by a thousand dollars. The home owner still gets \$400 a month for rent and the thousand dollars has not left his income. Even though the home owner has not lost a thousand dollars, he reports to his spouse that the family is a thousand dollars more in debt than they originally anticipated.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the member from Regina Dewdney is the home owner, and he knows better. He's playing and

fiddling with the figures, as was noted by Mr. Johnstone. And, Mr. Speaker, that funny figures will come home to roost some day.

Dilution of the Cameco shares does not remove one penny from the accounts of Crown corporations, and the Finance minister has to know that. If he doesn't know that, indeed then I should be your Finance minister.

Mr. Speaker, I would like the Finance minister to stand up today and show the people of the province and this Assembly where a hundred million dollars actually left the coffers of the government. Stand up and open the books. Show us that. Mr. Speaker, tell the people what happened to the over \$250 million from CIC dividends.

Mr. Speaker, it's not just the bond-rating agency that questioned the credibility of the NDP. I have many questions to ask the NDP too, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, because of the open, honest government over there, I expect the answers. And I intend to get the answers for the people I represent in Wilkie and for the rest of the people of the province.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP are no longer in opposition where they can skirt responsibility. Along with government comes responsibility. This side of the House is here to see that the NDP are kept in check. And I'm looking forward, Mr. Speaker, to becoming more familiar with the new people and organizations that will help me do my job.

An Hon. Member: — That's good. You can quit now.

Mr. Britton: — It's your turn . . . (inaudible) . . .

As a member of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition, my new responsibilities include seniors, the Women's Secretariat, and Highways and Transportation.

Great accomplishments have been made over the past nine years in all of these areas, Mr. Speaker, and I will be watching the NDP very closely to ensure that things like moratoriums the NDP placed on special home care beds are really and truly a thing of the past. I will look out for the best interests of seniors, the Women's Secretariat, and the people involved with the Highways and Transportation department.

And if the NDP continue not acting in the best interest of the people, they will hear from me, Mr. Speaker, and they will hear very often. And the NDP and myself, Mr. Speaker, have had a history of not necessarily agreeing all the time. And I am sure, I am sure the next few years will probably see a . . . I see you're smiling, Mr. Speaker. You're remembering a few of the boards we sit on. That's fine; I accept that.

I accept, Mr. Speaker, disagreements in this House. The people in this House are all strong-minded people or they wouldn't be here. There are also people who have their people at home respect their opinions or they wouldn't be here. So it doesn't bother me to disagree; it doesn't bother me to have someone disagree with me.

What does bother me, Mr. Speaker, is when the other people don't listen to your argument. And I find that very,

very hard to accept. There are people on that side of the House, Mr. Speaker, have closed their mind to anything but their own rhetoric.

Mr. Speaker, it has been a pleasure for me to address the Speech from the Throne and I thank you for the attention you seem to have given to my remarks. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Koskie: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want first of all, Mr. Speaker, to join with other members to congratulate you on assuming the Speaker of the legislature. I may only say that during the past week I was out in the area where you grew up, and I want to say that the reports and the reception to that appointment have been very, very positive.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Koskie: — I want also to take this opportunity to congratulate all of the new members that have been elected to the Assembly. And I want to congratulate them on their speeches that they have given to the Assembly on the Speech from the Throne.

Also, Mr. Speaker, I want to acknowledge my constituency which I have represented now for some 16 years. This is the fifth occasion, consecutive occasion, that the people of Quill Lakes have placed their trust in me to represent them, and indeed I'm very pleased to carry forward that trust.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Koskie: — As a veteran member of this legislature — and may I say effective — I want to indicate, Mr. Speaker, just a few comments in respect to the Assembly. I think it's important that if we start talking about changes to the rules of the Assembly that we would be very careful in analysing what changes we're going to propose.

We may want to say that this is an inefficient legislature. Some may want to say that there's a waste of time. Some may say there's repetition in speeches. But I want to say to you that we have to guard against the principle the Tories have propounded across this nation, that if a government is elected they can do what they want and the people can vote them out after four years, or five years in the case of the Tories. And I say we have to guard and protect the people's rights as well.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Koskie: — And I want to demonstrate how the rules of the past of this Assembly served the people well. And some may have said they were inefficient or we were hijacking the legislature. Let me give you a couple examples.

I recall that the premier of the province at that time was on the kick on privatization. And the Tories across this province in their own literature indicated to the people of Saskatchewan that they would never privatize a public utility. That was in their

documents. That was in their literature. And they said they would never privatize. And that was the word of the premier in this House.

And what happened? As soon as they came back and got re-elected, they decided they were going to privatize SaskPower by splitting Power and Energy. And I'll tell you the rules of the House provided that you could in fact ring the bells. And I'll tell you we rang the bells and the people of Saskatchewan responded, and I'll tell you we stopped them in their tracks on the privatization of SaskEnergy.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Koskie: — And I want to say that when the Tories also put in the PST, we in opposition and the public of Saskatchewan opposed the PST. And they came and they expressed that, and they provided to the opposition a hundred and twenty thousand petitioners' names opposing that PST.

And we used the rules of the House and we may have been wasting time, but I'll tell you the voice of the people of Saskatchewan was heard under those rules.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Koskie: — And I don't want a legislature that suddenly becomes committees and hidden rules. I want as much in this legislature an open debate as possible. And I don't like limitations on speeches either because I think there are opportunities when you have to challenge and you have to protect the rights of the people of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Koskie: — I'll tell you, I would rather have us here either ringing the bells and organizing with the public to oppose oppressive actions of governments, or filing petitions, than to have merely the press give the interpretation of what's happening in politics. I would rather have it over television where the people of Saskatchewan can view it.

And so when we start talking about waste and inefficiency, remember this. It is not a waste if the people of Saskatchewan and their voice can be heard, and the rules provide for that.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Koskie: — I was somewhat amazed when on the first occasion of the opening of the legislature here, or the first day on the debate on the Speech from the Throne, the Leader of the Opposition came roaring into the legislature. I guess he still thought he was the premier. Here's a man that has been decimated, totally decimated his party in his leadership, comes roaring into the legislature — I guess he still thinks he's the premier — repeating the same old worn out slogan that he's been using in the campaign, yelling out, what's the plan? No plan.

Well I want to tell you, members of the legislature, that in fact we have a plan, and I'm going to deal a little bit with what the plan is.

First of all we're going to clean up the financial mess that we inherited from the Tories across the way.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Koskie: — This is probably the most disgraceful performance financially of any province in the history of this nation — the legacy that is left behind by the members opposite, the official opposition. Five point eight billion — somewhere in that neighbourhood, once we count up the overrun this year — \$5.8 billion on the backs of future generations.

Deferred taxation, and the member for Wilkie starts standing up and starts talking about a lower credit rating. Well I wonder whether it just happened in the last 32 or 35 days. No. No, I'll tell you, the credit rating is down because of the record of the Tories opposite, and that's the facts.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(1630)

Mr. Koskie: — We have a financial mess because as we look, as we look at the exorbitant salaries that were paid to political hacks — \$423,000 to a George Hill, and the list goes on — exorbitant severance packages to the friends of the Tories; patronage, waste, mismanagement, scandals, and improper privatizations. That's our first priority. Just as if you took over almost a bankrupt company, you have to clean up the mess, the financial mess of mismanagement in the past. And that financial mess rests right at the feet of the former premier, the member from Estevan.

And the second thing we're going to do, and do it rapidly, is to determine where all the money went. As I went around during this campaign, person after person kept saying to me, where has all that money gone? They got a deficit of 5.8 billion, and with the Crowns, something like 14 or \$16 billion. And we're going to find that out. They say, where could that money have gone? We're taxed to death. They've sold off the assets, we got deficit, we got cut in services. Where's the money gone? That's what the people of Saskatchewan want.

And I'll tell you, that's a plan — plan to clean up the financial mess, to determine how bad an operation you ran across the way. That's a plan. And the people of Saskatchewan deserve to know how bad you were, and they're going to find out.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Koskie: — You know, what a wonderful legacy that you've left behind. You took over a province with the lowest per capita debt in all of Canada; you took over a province with investment rate second to none in Canada. And today what do we have? We have the largest per capita debt in the nation. We have the highest personal income tax in Canada. We have the second highest rate of poverty incidence other than Newfoundland. That's the legacy of your management — rather your mismanagement. And we're going to change that.

And I want to say that why are we surprised by this mess that we have inherited? To me it's not particularly startling because of the basic philosophy of the right-wing Tory government.

I've read a book by Kevin Phillips who's a Republican. And he used to work for Richard Nixon, and he wrote a book called *The Politics of Rich and Poor*. And in that book he analyses the Reaganomics or the Reagan years and he traces the history of what happened in the United States.

And he said, in the U.S., almost like clockwork, every 50 years there is a right-wing movement in the United States: 1870, 1920, and the latter part of the 1970s when Jimmy Carter was president of the United States. Every 50 years, he analyses, there is unbridled capitalism has hit United States. And at that time government is made out to be the enemy of the people, perceived to be the hindrance to the economic development. Social programs are destroyed.

And under the Ronald Reagan years what happened most of all was the massive transfer of wealth to those who were already wealthy. A very small percentage of people in the United States control over 50, 60 per cent of all the wealth in United States.

And what has happened? Debt in United States has climbed as it has climbed here in Saskatchewan. The U.S.A. prior to Reagan was the greatest creditor nation in the world. Today it's the largest debtor nation in the world. And worst of all, what he says, maybe there is no longer a possibility of the fulfilment of the American dream. Because he said . . . worst of all, what happened during this transfer of wealth to those who already had it, he says that there was very little development took place in North America, very little development. Mostly what it was primarily was a paper transfer. The merger of corporations and the consolidation of . . . massing of greater, greater wealth in the hands of fewer and fewer. And as a consequence, what has happened is that the middle class has been eroded.

And that's what happened in Saskatchewan. We saw much of the same things carrying on. We saw the deregulations and we saw the privatization. We saw the Free Trade Agreement, and we have seen a shift of wealth from the people to certain privileged groups.

I look at the potash industry. And here we have brought in an American to run the public corporation. Absolutely totally opposed to the concept of public ownership of a potash corporation. How could you possibly expect that individual to run it in the interest of making it a working corporation?

Better still, let it run down. Sell it when it's losing and then control it. And today Chuck Childers walked away with the most advanced technology and the best minds anywhere in the world. And as chief executive officer of a privatized corporation, he is instantly in control of the potash in Saskatchewan.

We know the Weyerhaeuser story; we know the Cargill — \$64 million in cash, \$305 million in guarantee. We

know the hand-out to Pocklington. And so what we have had here is a corporate welfare while the people of Saskatchewan have had to struggle and to be abused with the ever increasing debt placed upon their backs and their children. This is the legacy of the Tory government — of waste, hand-outs, mismanagement, scandals.

You know during the campaign a business man said this to me and I don't think it could ever be said better. He said, I don't want only to defeat the Tories. He said, I want to defeat them so bad that I never ever in my lifetime have to deal with them again as a ruling party.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Koskie: — Those were the comments of a business man and those are the comments of a lot of people across Saskatchewan.

I want to turn also to another area that I think the former government betrayed, and that is agriculture. And what I can't understand is how the premier of this . . . former premier of this province would have the unadulterated gall to walk into this House proposing an emergency debate after we're in office for 32 days and he had been there for nine and a half years saying to the people of Saskatchewan: we've got a crisis in agriculture; what are you going to do?

Well I'll tell you what his record has done. I'll tell you the state of agriculture that you people have left it in. If you look at the revenues, realized net income in 1991 was projected at \$378 million. And that was a small increase over the net revenue in 1990, which was \$226 million. The 1990 and 1991 realized net incomes are substantially below the 1985-89 level of \$786.4 million.

The point I'm making here is that the revenues to the agricultural community in 1990 was substantially one of the lowest in the last decade. And did the then premier of this province, did he go to Ottawa to seek further assistance? No, sir. But about 10 days beforehand, after the farmers extracted it, he went down for a pizza and a Coke and came back and said, I got \$800 million.

Look at the situation that exists in agriculture. Foreclosure notices to Saskatchewan farmers have increased from 477 in '86 to 1,359 in 1990. Bankruptcy filings have increased from 41 to 189 in the same period. Farm Debt Review has handled 6,142 applications from 1986. And foreclosures, voluntary assignment, agricultural lenders have acquired 2.1 million acres of land during the Tory regime. When Mr. Agriculture was in charge, that's what happened.

I say that they let the farmers down. He hasn't defended agriculture. He's allowed the federal government to off-load the responsibility. He allowed them to cut out the two-price wheat system of some \$280 million. He allowed the cash advance to be cut. We had to force him to bring it back in. Crop insurance was shifted to the province, and no debt restructuring.

And if you look at the debt, Mr. Speaker, you find that one-third

of the farmers have 71 per cent of the total debt; one-third have about 27 per cent; and the top one-third have about 2 per cent. And for years this premier, the former premier, so-called agricultural economist, couldn't figure that out that he needed to address the debt restructuring.

And I want to commend the government and the Premier of the province for his efforts and his trek to Ottawa, and the Minister of Agriculture, and all of the concerned farmers.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Koskie: — I think the biggest disappointment was that the former premier, the former minister of Agriculture — Mr. Agriculture himself — saw fit not to go. But then with what he has really done for agriculture, better that he stay at home.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Koskie: — So, Mr. Speaker, we do have a plan. We're going to clean up the financial mess. We're going to open the books to see what kind of deals were transacted which were not in the interest of the people. And I'll tell you we're going to set up a government to deal with the priorities facing the people of this province.

We're going to introduce new management, new fiscal responsibility. We're going to open the books. We're going to cut waste and mismanagement. We're going to generate revenues and give opportunities to our young people to get jobs. And I'll tell you we're going to address as best as possible the magnitude of the agricultural crisis.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I just want to say that the people of Saskatchewan have a long and honourable tradition of working together for their mutual advantage. They've created a great province through individual initiative and mutual co-operation. They have rejected the politics, the Tory politics of misery, the Tory politics of confrontation, the Tory politics of exploitation. They reject the dismal Tory prescription for the future.

They're looking once again to the New Democratic Party, a party that measures success in the terms of the sensitivity to the rights and the needs of others, and most particularly to those who are most in need. They are once more looking for a new deal for all, a fair deal for all. They're looking to the New Democratic Party to provide a new decade of progress, a new dimension of purpose. A New Democratic Party government will provide that.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(1645)

Mr. Koskie: — I want to say, Mr. Speaker, we accept this responsibility. And I am confident that, working with people of this province, that we can rebuild the province from the ruins left behind by the former Tory government, and we can build a province to give security and opportunity to all our people.

Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to enter this debate, to join with my colleagues here to support the initial plans of rebuilding Saskatchewan, as outlined in the throne

speech.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Amendment negatived.

The Speaker: — The debate will continue on the main motion.

Mr. Koenker: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all, Mr. Speaker, I want to sincerely congratulate you on your election to the Chair. I'm convinced that your impartiality and your fairness and your honesty will be a distinct contribution to the reordering of the proceedings of this Legislative Assembly and to the benefit of the people of Saskatchewan in the long run.

I want to say that it strikes me as very fitting that this legislature convenes in these dying days of December and of the new year, as we pass through the very darkest and some of the very shortest days of the year, that we should have the legislature sitting, so to speak, in a historic twilight zone in Saskatchewan.

The election has been held; an old government has died. A new government has come to life, much as a new day comes to life. It strikes me that we're very much about 5 or 10 minutes after midnight in the life of the province in this transition between the governments.

We live with the legacy of darkness and despair across the province, but there also is the promise of some light on the horizon. But we still have a long wait until dawn breaks and there is an awful lot of darkness and despair to be dealt with these next days. And I'm not going to deal with that despair and that darkness.

The record of the previous government is only too well known — the destruction of our social programs, the senseless give-away of public assets, the mountain of debt that we've inherited, the exorbitant, excessive patronage, the trampling on democratic rights. These are symptomatic of a government that had gone wild and out of control and lost contact with the public and its own priorities. And all of us here in Saskatchewan are going to have to pay for that, and are going to have to live with the consequences and the darkness for some time to come.

But, Mr. Speaker, while we must live with darkness and despair, much as people live with darkness in the opening hours of a new day, we also have the promise of some hope and some light. And I'd like to focus on those dimensions, or those aspects, of our experience right now.

And first and foremost, I want to say that there is new hope, and there is a new day for Saskatchewan people. And this new day and this new hope is based on a very simple and ancient and sacred promise or principle, namely that we are our brother or our sister's keeper. And that's why . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Koenker: — I want to send the signal to the people of Saskatchewan that this government is going to address

the realities of poverty and hunger. It's one of the things our colleague and my friend, Peter Prebble, worked for and laboured for while he was in opposition. And while he's not here as part of this Legislative Assembly, his efforts are going to live on and his colleagues that are here are going to see that poverty and hunger are eliminated from Saskatchewan and will never scourge families and children again.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Koenker: — The first responsibility that any government owes its people is to feed them. And we're going to do exactly that.

And the cousins of poverty and hunger, racism and sexism, are going to be tackled by this government as well; the crying need to eliminate racial injustices across the province. The injustices suffered by Indian and Metis people for years and years are going to be dealt with.

We're going to eliminate discrimination either on the basis of sexual orientation or physical or mental handicaps. We're going to stand with the victims of violence and abuse and support interval houses for them. And we're going to help those who are struggling with alcoholism and criminal records and other personal problems in their lives. Why? Because we believe we are our brother and our sister's keeper. It's that simple.

And a second principle I want to talk about briefly, that gives hope to the people of the province, is the principle that there's enough still left here in Saskatchewan, and there's enough still left in the government of Saskatchewan, for everyone's need but not for their greed. And that's why we're going to fight the privatization of medicare that we've seen these last number of years. The imposition of user fees, subtly the erosion of public funding for medical care, the dental care program, the prescription drug program, symptomatic of the selfish ethic of the strong, is going to give way to a new ethic of caring and sharing. And we're going to fight for a return to universal, publicly funded, accessible medicare across this province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Koenker: — And we send signals to the people of Saskatchewan then that in spite of the enormous financial problems that we face, there's enough for everyone's need but not for everyone's greed when it comes to something like health care. And we're going to support some of the poorest of the poor. I'm going to work to see that this government funds agencies like the Saskatchewan Council for International Co-operation, that works with people who are hungering across the world.

And there's a third principle to bring hope to the darkness and despair surrounding us, and that is that this government is going to serve and protect the public interest. We're going to review the deals that have been made in secret by the previous government with the Financial Review Commission and give the people an accounting for what's happened, to protect the public interest. We're going to fight for a fair tax system,

eliminating the provincial GST (goods and services tax) in this session of the legislature. We're going to take a first step with that toward a reform of the tax system, to reworking the unfair flat tax that has to go along the way of the flat earth society.

And we're going to make a commitment to the education of our children, and I want to say a commitment to the accessibility of higher education in the province at the University of Saskatchewan, which is in my constituency.

A fourth principle that's going to guide this government — and it's going to see the dawning of a new day in Saskatchewan — is that we are going to start to pay the bills and forget the frills.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Koenker: — I want to say to the people of Saskatchewan that we are going to cut to the bone government advertising and travel. We're going to cut out things like free booze at government functions and end the freebies and the special favours, even for MLAs (members of the Legislative Assembly). And the people of Saskatchewan ought to know that at the beginning of this first Legislative Assembly there was no traditional opening of the legislative . . . party or dinner for MLAs and their families. And I think that's a tribute to a new style of leadership that we're seeing from the government.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Koenker: — And I want to say to the people of Saskatchewan that they are going to see a lot more leadership from this Premier and this government with respect to paying the bills and forgetting the frills. And we invite public suggestions in this regard, incidentally.

A fifth principle, just briefly, that will guide us to the new day here in Saskatchewan is that we are going to act with an eye to future generations and what we owe them and not just what we can take for ourselves. I think . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Koenker: — The implications of this are very clear in terms of the environment, for anybody who thinks about it. We're going to act on the conservation ethic that was proposed or announced in our election campaign. We're going to nurture and protect our environment as stewards. And I personally am going to work to see that there is no CANDU 3 reactor in this province or slowpoke reactor on the University of Saskatchewan campus.

Closer to home, when we look with an eye to the future and future generations and what we owe them, when it comes to an issue like abortion, this government just isn't going to posture on the issue with a plebiscite wanting an expression of public opinion. We're going to tackle the issue of abortion head on and we're going to work to eliminate or obviate the need for abortion across Saskatchewan and support our young

people.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Koenker: — We're going to support our young people with contraceptive education and by providing day care for single parents in schools. That single mothers should have to give up their education or their child is not good enough, and we're going to see that they can continue their education and their pregnancies to term, and do something about the scourge of abortion in this province.

And finally, a sixth and final principle that will lead us to the new day that's going to dawn in Saskatchewan amidst the darkness, is this government is going to commit itself to democratic reform, that true democratic reform.

And we see this in fact in legislation that has been introduced already in this legislative session. That any constituency like Indian Head-Wolseley here in Saskatchewan should go one year, nine months, and two days without representation is reprehensible. And we are legislating for the fixed provision of by-elections within six months. We're going to rejuvenate legislative committees, and we're going to legislate in this session a return to the option of the ward system across Saskatchewan.

The Speech from the Throne, Mr. Speaker, opens with reference to the need to restore public confidence and trust in elected office, to restore that confidence and trust in the context of the values that built this province. And I want to close on that note and say that across the province, in spite of the deep cynicism that gnaws at the public about politicians and their political institutions and the political process, we need a renewal of the values that built this province and that were abandoned the last nine years.

And I want to say that I intend in the coming months, as I have opportunity both here in the legislature and outside, to advance some of the values and some of the priorities that I've just talked about.

And in conclusion I want to thank the people of Saskatoon Sutherland for putting their confidence and trust in me by re-electing me, and thank my wife and family for the sacrifices they have made to allow public service to take place. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Assembly adjourned at 4:58 p.m.